



State of New Jersey

March 3, 2003

Dear Municipal and County Leaders:

We are writing to inform you of progress in the continuing dialogue between the League of Municipalities and Governor McGreevey's administration as the State of New Jersey implements the Governor's initiatives to stop the overdevelopment and congestion that are compromising New Jersey's quality of life.

In his State of the State address, Governor McGreevey committed to both legislative and regulatory measures to combat sprawl and to promote development and redevelopment in areas where growth is appropriate from an environmental or planning perspective. Legislation now under development will give municipalities the tools they need to better manage growth, to plan and build needed infrastructure, and to say 'no' to unwelcome development. There will be further consultation with the League prior to introduction of the legislative package.

Just as important are the regulatory reforms proposed to implement Governor McGreevey's vision. Many of you are aware that the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has released its Blueprint for Intelligent Growth (BIG) map, which is intended to make DEP's regulations more transparent and predictable, to streamline decisions and approvals in areas appropriate for growth from an environmental or planning perspective, and to set tougher standards in areas of significant environmental or natural resource value. Most importantly, development of the DEP Map is the first step in the process to reconcile DEP's regulations with the State Development and Redevelopment Plan (the State Plan) and with regulations of other departments.

The release of the DEP Map has generated a torrent of interest and concern among municipalities. The League has advocated for a more robust process of consultation with affected municipalities to ensure that potential conflicts with local aspirations for growth and preservation are addressed, particularly in light of the substantial investments that many municipalities have made in the cross-acceptance process under the State Plan. Commissioners Campbell and Levin, Secretary Kuperus, and State Planning Commission Chairman Tim Touhey have responded and want to provide for meaningful opportunities for input by municipalities. The following outlines the process now planned by the Administration.

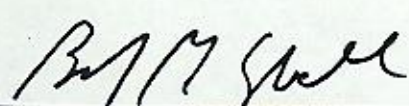
- On February 25, Commissioners Levin and Campbell and Secretary Kuperus had an initial meeting with county planning officials to discuss the process for developing and implementing the DEP Map and reconciling the map with the State Plan and with local planning efforts. We would like to emphasize that the Mayors will be invited to participate in any county meetings regarding the DEP Map.
- On March 3, the New Jersey Register will publish an "Interested Party Review" (IPR) notice marking the availability of a more detailed, user-friendly version of the DEP Map on the DEP website that will allow municipalities to view the map at a high level of local detail and to identify environmental or natural resource criteria underlying the designation of any particular area. An IPR is a mechanism that allows a period of informal public comment before the formal rulemaking process begins.

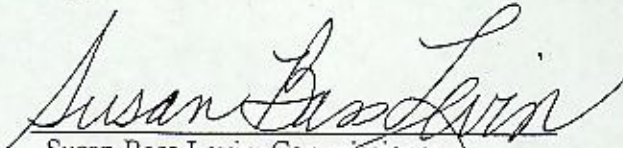
- Executive Order Number 4 directed State Agencies to "incorporate the principles of smart growth and the State Plan into their functional plans and regulations" and to "review rules and regulations to ensure their actions are consistent with the principles of smart growth and the State Plan." To guide that effort, the Office of Smart Growth has a working definition of Smart Growth Areas, which includes Planning Area 1, Planning Area 2 with sewers and Designated Centers. In addition to the 93 already-designated Centers, the Office of Smart Growth has identified other center-based communities that are potential Smart Growth Areas based on existing infrastructure and development patterns. Under separate cover, the DCA will explain the procedure for incorporating these communities into the Smart Growth Areas definition. The DCA will coordinate both efforts with the DEP Map.
- With the release of the IPR version of the DEP Map, DEP will identify and seek comment on initial regulatory reforms that will be designed to facilitate growth in areas appropriate for growth and discourage development in areas that present environmental or natural resource concerns.
- Throughout this process, DEP and the Office of Smart Growth will be available to confer informally with concerned municipal and planning officials prior to the formal proposal of the map and regulatory reforms.
- While the DEP Map is under review, the State Planning Commission will review data and amend the State Plan Policy Map to make it a better tool. The State Planning Commission will conduct cross acceptance as required and include environmental data as a part of the State Plan Policy Map to continue to improve this tool.

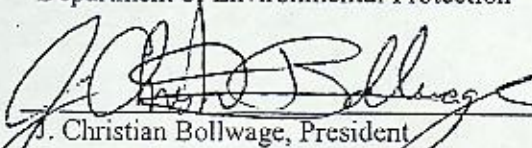
It is important to understand that during this process, new applications for any permit, approval, authorization, or other regulatory decision shall be processed according to current regulations and standard procedures and timetables. The DEP Map should not be the basis for regulatory or other decisions and should not otherwise be relied on unless and until the regulations are formally adopted by regulation following notice and comment.

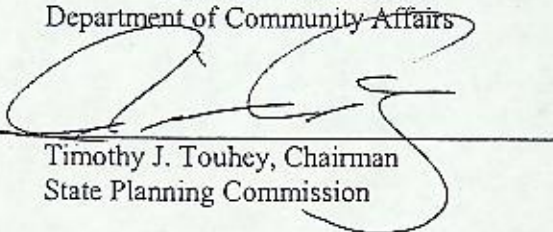
While this is a lengthy and involved process of review and consultation, both the League and the McGreevey Administration are committed to ensuring that the views of municipalities are heard and considered. You can obtain more information about the State's smart growth initiatives on the websites of the Department of Environmental Protection (www.nj.gov/dep/antisprawl/) and of the Office of Smart Growth in the Department of Community Affairs (www.nj.gov/dca/osg). In addition to the process of consultation outlined here, each of us stands ready to work with you individually as we empower municipalities to protect the quality of life in New Jersey's communities.

Sincerely,


Bradley M. Campbell, Commissioner
Department of Environmental Protection


Susan Bass Levin, Commissioner
Department of Community Affairs


J. Christian Bollwege, President
League of Municipalities


Timothy J. Touhey, Chairman
State Planning Commission